

Revelation 10–11: The Trumpets and the Interlude

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Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Dave Mathewson examines Revelation 10 and 11 as a crucial theological interlude that interprets the purpose of the trumpet judgments rather than acting as a chronological delay. He explains the demonic nature of the 200 million cavalry in chapter 9 and highlights humanity's persistent refusal to repent, showing how the final judgment reflects human choice. Mathewson then details John's recommissioning through eating the sweet and sour scroll, introducing the role of the church's faithful witness and suffering as the means through which God establishes His kingdom and executes judgment. Ultimately, the interlude reveals that the cry of the persecuted saints is answered as divine delay ends and God's sovereign purposes reach culmination.

Outline

I. Review and Context of the Sixth Trumpet Plague (Revelation 9:13–21)

A. Release of the Four Angels and Demonic Cavalry

1. Angels bound at the Euphrates released to unleash destruction on the earth.
2. The '200 million' cavalry represents an uncountably vast, symbolic demonic onslaught rather than a literal human military.
3. Physical overlaps with locust plagues (lion teeth, reptilian traits, smoke, and sulfur).
4. Judgment intensifies: authorization to slay one-third of humanity (limited, symbolic/spiritual and physical judgment).

B. The Hardening of Unrepentant Humanity

1. Plagues function as limited harbinger judgments anticipating final eschatological judgment (Revelation 19–20).
2. Human refusal to repent mirrors Pharaoh's hardened heart during the Exodus plagues.
3. Theological implication: humanity actively chooses judgment and idolatry over God's lordship.

II. Function of the Interlude in Chapters 10 and 11

A. Interpretive Role Rather than Chronological Digression

1. Pauses the sequential judgments before the seventh trumpet (the third woe).

2. Explains the theological foundation and divine purpose behind the trumpet plagues of chapters 8–9.

3. Addresses the active role and spiritual position of God's people during judgments.

B. Recommissioning of John to Prophecy

1. Shifts focus from specific local churches (Chapters 1–3) to all nations, peoples, languages, and kings.

2. Frames divine judgment as God's response to world persecution and rejection of His faithful witnesses.

III. Detailed Analysis of Revelation 10: The Mighty Angel and the Little Scroll

A. Description and Identity of the Mighty Angel (Rev 10:1–3a)

1. Robed in a cloud, rainbow above head, face like the sun, legs like fiery pillars.

2. Sovereign stance: right foot on sea, left foot on land, shouting with a lion-like roar.

3. Identification: A majestic, symbolic portrayal of Jesus Christ as the sovereign Lord of creation.

B. The Mystery of the Seven Thunders (Rev 10:3b–4)

1. Seven thunders speak, but John is commanded to seal up the words and not record them.

2. Three primary interpretational perspectives:

a. Indication that aspects of God's divine plan remain unrevealed and hidden from human knowledge.

b. Suspension or shortening of further preliminary judgments out of divine grace.

c. Termination of preliminary warnings, moving directly to final judgment because humanity refuses to repent.

C. Proclamation of No More Delay (Rev 10:5–7)

1. Mighty angel raises right hand and swears by the eternal Creator (echoing Daniel 12:7).

2. 'Time will be no more' / 'No more delay': historical process of waiting reaches its culmination.

3. Direct fulfillment answering the martyrs' cry under the altar ('How long, O Lord?') in Revelation 6:10.

D. John Eats the Open Scroll (Rev 10:8–11)

1. The scroll is the same scroll unsealed by the Lamb in Revelation 5, now standing open.

2. Drawing on Ezekiel 2–3 intertextuality: John takes and eats the scroll.

3. Experience of consumption: sweet in the mouth (salvation/truth) but bitter/sour in the stomach (judgment/suffering).

4. Recommissioning mandate: John must prophesy again concerning many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.

IV. Preview of Revelation 11: The Temple, the Two Witnesses, and the Culmination

A. The Measurement of the Temple (Rev 11:1–2)

1. John given a reed to measure the temple, altar, and count the worshippers.

2. Exclusion of the outer court, handed over to Gentiles to trample for 42 months.
3. Symbolic preservation and spiritual protection of God's people amidst earthly persecution.

B. The Ministry and Martyrdom of the Two Witnesses (Rev 11:3–14)

1. Prophetic witness for 1,260 days dressed in sackcloth (symbolized as two olive trees and two lampstands).
2. Supernatural authority (fire from mouth, shutting heavens, plagues) modeled on Elijah and Moses.
3. Martyrdom: The beast from the abyss attacks and kills them; world celebrates over their unburied bodies for 3.5 days.
4. Vindication: Resurrection, ascension in a cloud, terror hitting observers, and severe earthquake leading survivors to glorify God.

C. Theological Conclusion

1. God's kingdom and final judgment are established ironically through the suffering testimony and vindication of the church.
2. Rejection of faithful witness forms the righteous ground for final judgment executed at the sounding of the seventh trumpet.